

FAIR FUTURES PROGRAM MANUAL

SECTION 21

POST-SECONDARY EXPOSURE, PLANNING, & PERSISTENCE

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SECTION 21A, 21B, & 21C

A. OVERVIEW

An important goal of the Fair Futures program is for young people to eventually navigate onto a living wage career path. This often requires a college degree and/or post-secondary credential(s), combined with career development experiences.

There are some specific career pathways where a high school degree may suffice; however, those pathways are few and far between, and often extremely competitive (e.g., becoming a firefighter, an MTA motorman, etc.). Even with these positions, having some sort of post-secondary degree/credential will ultimately help the young person advance, increase their earning power, and/or have more career mobility.

Therefore, Coaches and Specialists should expose young people to various post-secondary options as early as possible, including college and accredited vocational programs, and help them start to plan and prepare.

This exposure and planning should begin in the 9th grade, ideally. Using assessment tools can help youth to determine what post-secondary path may be best for them.

TIP! See [Career Exploration Tools](#) (coming soon!) for more information.

B. POST-SECONDARY GOAL-SETTING

Unless a young person is already enrolled in a post-secondary setting, **all young people should have at least 1+ post-secondary exposure/planning goal each year.**

This includes young people who are disconnected and without a high school degree. For these young people, the goal could simply be exploration. For example, the Coach could take them to a college campus or vocational program. That exploratory experience could be what motivates the young person to re-engage in high school and/or visualize a pathway for themselves!

See [Appendix F_Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#) to determine which post-secondary goal would apply to the young person based on their situation.

For those not ready to apply to a post-secondary setting, an exposure/exploration goal should be selected – either “[Conduct College Exploration/Exposure](#)” and/or “[Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways](#).”

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN SETTING POST-SECONDARY GOALS:

Students enrolled in a high school or HSE program should engage in the “[Conduct College Exploration/ Exposure](#)” Goal, even if they do not express a strong interest in college.

This is because for many young people, college was never on their radar (and/or they may not know any adults who attended college), so it may take some time for them to believe that it is a viable pathway.

To complete this goal, the Coach could even take the student to visit a college during one of their coaching sessions together – a trip to Bryant Park to see Guttman Community College, or a tour of City College or John Jay.

For students who express an interest in the trades or a vocational setting:

The Goal “[Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways](#)” should be selected. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21J](#).

The College Exploration Goal could also be selected, too, however; many advanced careers in the trades require a college degree (e.g., Construction Project Managers need a Bachelor’s degree in Construction Project Management).

For these students’ Career Development Goal, the Coach could help them explore [classes/paid internships at Co-Op Tech](#) so they can earn a credential(s) while enrolled in high school. Refer to [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for other pathways into the trades during and after high school.

Students enrolled in a school where they are alternately assessed will not be eligible to enroll in college, some trade schools, or the military. The first step in long-range planning for these students should always be to verify that the alternate assessment designation is appropriate (i.e. that the student has a severe intellectual or developmental disability that will prevent them from graduating from high school). Sometimes students are erroneously categorized as Alternate Assessment (due to outdated evaluations or evaluations conducted after a profound trauma) when in fact they have the potential to complete a high school course of study. If there is any doubt at all that a student should be on alternate assessment, then updated psychoeducational evaluations, and, if necessary, independent evaluations, should be sought for these students. For these students who are appropriately designated for Alternate Assessment, the Post-Secondary Goal should be [“Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways”](#) and the Career Development Goal should be [“Apply to ACCES-VR”](#).

After graduation, some young people may need more time to develop their academic skills in a remedial setting or take a “gap year” before enrolling in a post-secondary setting.

Taking a gap year between high school and college, as long as it is a productive one that allows that young person to develop skills/experiences in line with their longer-term goals, is a pathway that may be best for some young people. Young people could engage in a Career Development Experience (e.g., a workforce program) to earn money, build their skills, and/or earn a credential while brushing up on remedials. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22](#) for pathways/options and refer to the Career Development Directory.

Young people with a high school degree/equivalency who are not yet enrolled in any post-secondary setting should also have at least one exploration/exposure goal. Even if they are not yet ready to enroll (and want to work, for example), post-secondary exposure/exploration is important.

If they need to earn money, there are ways for them to get a paycheck while working on earning a post-secondary credential:

- The young person could attend college full-time (and likely receive significant funding - see [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21E](#)) and also get paid \$15/hour to do work/study
- The young person could attend college part-time and have a part-time job or paid internship
- The young person could enroll in a workforce development program that offers sector-based training in their area of interest along with a paid internship (and work part-time, if needed/possible)

C. ROLE OF A COACH IN HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH POST-SECONDARY GOALS

The Coach’s role in helping young people explore their post-secondary goals will depend on where they are. Coaches should also involve birth and/or foster parents in the post-secondary planning process to ensure the young person is being supported.

AT A HIGH LEVEL, THE ROLE OF THE COACH BASED ON A YOUNG PERSON’S SITUATION

For young people in high school/HSE program and interested in college:

- Coaches work with the student and their guidance counselor (or HSE program staff) to ensure they are on-track for high school graduation and have a plan in place for college. The student will also meet with the College Specialist to identify best-fit colleges, complete admissions and financial aid applications, apply to support and opportunity programs, reapply each semester, and renew all forms of financial aid each year.
- The student should meet with the College Specialist to identify best-fit colleges, complete admissions and financial aid applications, apply to classes, reapply each semester, and renew all forms of financial aid each year.

For young people in high school/HSE program and interested in a vocational/other post-secondary pathway:

- Coaches work with the student and their guidance counselor (or HSE program staff) to ensure they are on-track for graduation and exploring post-secondary pathways.
- For youth who are not yet ready to enroll in a vocational program upon graduation, there are workforce bridge programs that help prepare youth to gain skills/credentials and take the next step toward their goals.
- The Coach will connect these students to the Career Development Specialist to discuss best-fit programs and other options (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21J](#), [Section 22](#), and the [Career Development Directory](#)).

For young people already enrolled in college:

- The Coach helps the young person persist by following up during critical junctures, connecting them to resources on and off campus, providing emotional support, and ensuring they meet with the College Specialist to renew their financial aid and funding each semester.

For young people with a high school degree/equivalency but not enrolled in a post-secondary setting:

- The Coach will help them explore college or vocational pathways and connect them to the appropriate Specialist. If a young person is not yet prepared for the rigors of a post-secondary program, the Coach and Career Development Specialist can assist the young person in identifying a work experience or a program that can help them earn money while gaining the skills they need to prepare for a post-secondary setting.

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SECTION 21D - SECTION 21G

D. COLLEGE EXPOSURE & PREPARATION

TIP! See [Appendix G2_College Exposure, Planning, Enrollment and Persistence Flow Chart](#).

COLLEGE EXPOSURE/EXPLORATION

Coaches help expose students to post-secondary pathways starting in 9th grade (or as early as possible, if they come into foster care at a later age). Sometimes, young people cannot envision themselves attending or succeeding in college or a post-secondary setting, as they may not have performed well in school and/or they may not know many (or any) adults who graduated.

Early post-secondary exposure, combined with career exploration and career development activities, can help young people envision success and start to plan and prepare for their post-secondary journey.

If **“Conduct College Exploration/Exposure”** is selected as a Goal*, some of the associated Steps include:

- Young person to meet with College Specialist and/or Coach to learn more about college
- Enroll in First Star Academy *if student is entering 9th grade* (See [Appendix G1_First Star Academy Overview](#))
- Attend peer group related to college
- Explore colleges online
- Attend a college fair
- Visit college(s)
- Discuss college experience with current/former student or credible messenger
- Engage foster parent/parent and/or significant adult figure(s); encourage them to provide support
- Discuss college options with other adults involved in the young person’s life

*If youth is still in high school/HSE program, Coach to meet with the high school guidance counselor and student to discuss options, progress towards graduation, and a plan for the remainder of high school. (see [Appendix F6_High School Graduation Checklist](#)).

Coaches should also identify 9th grade students that could benefit from **First Star Academy**, a rigorous 4-year college preparation program. One Saturday each month, students participate in academic and life skills programs at the College of Staten Island. After the first year, students experience college life for an entire month while living at the university’s apartment-style residence halls, deepening their involvement in the programs. See [Appendix G1_First Star Academy Overview](#).

If the young person is interested in a trades, vocational, or other post-secondary pathway, the Goal [“Explore vocational or other sector-based certificate programs/post-secondary pathways”](#) should be selected.

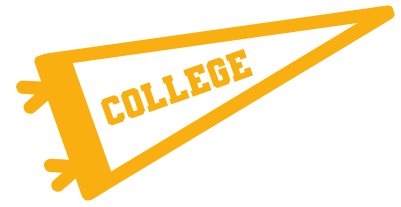
In this case, the next step would be:

- Meet with Coach and/or Career Development Specialist (and high school counselor, if applicable) to explore other post-secondary pathways. (Then proceed to the [Career Development Goals Roadmap](#) in [Appendix E_Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#).)

If after this meeting a vocational or other career pathway seems to be the best fit, then the appropriate goals should be selected in the Career Development section (e.g., enrolling in a workforce or vocational program, etc.).

PREPARATION/PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

If the young person is in a high school and wants to attend college, the goal “[Conduct College Preparation](#)” should be selected. It is the Coach’s role to ensure that students have the supports they need to succeed in high school and are enrolled in the proper coursework in order to graduate and pursue their post-secondary goal.



In the 9th grade, the student should be meeting with their Coach, Guidance Counselor, and the College Specialist. These meetings can take place separately, but all parties should be on the same page.

Key preparation/planning activities include:

- Review the student’s current (or most recent) transcript** with them to determine what their college roadmap could look like, based on their performance and the high school that they are enrolled in. For students in the 9th grade, even if performance was not strong in previous years, it should be emphasized that a 4-year school is an option if they remain on-track with their studies.
- Provide an overview of 2-year vs. 4-year college pathways**, and what each would entail in terms of their high school performance. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22E](#) for additional guidance.
- Review the financial resources available to foster youth and a typical college budget.** This is important, as some students may be under the impression that they cannot afford college. In reality, as long as the student maintains good academic standing and attends a CUNY or SUNY school, in almost all cases the student will have to pay little or nothing toward the cost of college. If their Coach/College Specialist follows all of the application and financial aid steps appropriately, the student will likely be able to cover most or all of their living expenses (food, transportation, etc.) without having to earn additional income. See [Appendix G19_College Budget Tools](#).
- Inform young person about **The Dormitory Project** (see [Appendix G13_Fair Futures Guide to the Dorm Project](#) and **ACS College Room & Board** options (see [Appendix G14_ACS College Room & Board](#)), if they are still in foster care.
- If appropriate, discuss out-of-state and private college options, and the pros and cons of these pathways. If a student is academically qualified, many private institutions will cover the full cost of attendance, and ACS provides funding to cover incidentals.

TIP!

For all post-secondary planning/preparation activities, broken by grade and semester, see [Appendix G4_College Planning and Preparation Timeline](#).

GOALS & STEPS

For students whose Goal is to “[Conduct College Preparation](#)”:

Required Steps include:

- Meet with high school counselor, Coach, and/or College Specialist to put a plan in place; ideally engage parent/foster parent
- Develop a college list (6 CUNY, 4+ SUNY, and others if eligible)

Potential Steps include:

- Enroll in A.P. classes
- Take PSATs
- Work with school to request needed accommodations on PSATs, SATs and A.P. exams
- Receive PSAT or SAT tutoring (or enroll in prep program)
- Take SATs
- Re-take SATs
- Re-take Regents exams to bring scores up to CUNY’s college readiness standards (70+ in Common Core Algebra and 75+ in Common Core ELA).

TIP!

Students with disabilities should refer to [Appendix G3_College Planning for Students with Disabilities](#).

E. COLLEGE APPLICATION & SELECTION

COLLEGE ADVISING



The College Specialist will assist the student in applying to colleges at the appropriate juncture, typically in the summer/early fall of that student's last year. However, if students are applying to 4-year colleges, they should be preparing their materials in their Junior year.

Students should aim to have their college applications and the FAFSA completed by the end of October ideally, and by the end of November at the latest - they should not wait until the school's admissions deadline to apply. This will put them in the best position to be accepted into opportunity programs, receive school-based financial aid, and more.

However, if students are applying to selective 4-year colleges that will require essays and recommendations, it is especially important that they begin preparing these materials before the start of their senior year they should be preparing their materials in the summer following their Junior year. See [Appendix G4_College Planning and Preparation Timeline For High Schoolers](#).

FOUR KEY QUESTIONS THAT STUDENTS SHOULD THINK ABOUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS:

Question 1: Is the student qualified for and interested in attending a 4-year college directly out of high school, or is a 2-year CUNY college more appropriate?

Generally speaking, 4-year colleges should be the starting point for students who are academically eligible to attend, as students attending 4-year schools tend to experience better on-time graduation outcomes than students who start at 2-year schools. (It also often takes high performing students 2.5 to 3 years to earn an Associate's degree, and another 2+ years to transfer and finish a Bachelor's degree.) Students with GPAs in or above the 75-80 range and SAT scores above 400/section can feasibly begin to look at 4-year schools.

That said, many students enter their senior year without the academic credentials needed to obtain admission to a four-year college, or with developmental needs in reading, writing, or math. These students should be matched with a two-year college and great care should be taken to ensure that they are connected with a support program or enroll at Guttman Community College, as students in these programs are much more likely to graduate college in a timely fashion.

Question 2: What majors/fields of study is the student interested in? This will help narrow down potential colleges.

Question 3: Where does the student want to live during college, and what is the student's housing situation right before entering college? This may be informed by the student's housing/permanency status.

The major categories here are:

- Somewhere out of the city.
- Somewhere in the city but in a dorm (in the Dorm Project, for instance).
- Somewhere in the city and not in a dorm (i.e. in a foster home).

Question 4: Are there other aspects of a potential school that are especially meaningful to the student?

These might include prestige, demographics/diversity of the student body, proximity to family, size of the school, and more. It's vital that everyone involved in the college coaching process listen carefully to what the student considers to be important in evaluating a school match.

For each potential school match, it is important to consider the graduation rate and cost of attendance of the school.

Graduation rates differ widely between schools; some graduate just 10 or 20% of their students, while others have graduation rates of 98 or 99%. Some of this has to do with the preparedness and affluence of the students who attend those schools, but the level of support available at the school is also an important factor in graduation rate.

Resources for assessing graduation rate and cost of attendance include:

[College Scorecard](#), a publicly available resource from USDOE that includes information about annual costs, timely graduation rates, long-term outcomes for students who enrolled as freshmen, and socio/economic and racial diversity at the school.

[College Results Online](#), which offers a deeper dive into graduation rates for specific student demographics, as well as information about collateral statistics such as first-year retention and transfer rates.

A student's permanency and housing status may influence their decision. (See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 23](#)).

For example, student situations may impact eligibility for certain programs:

Students in foster care and aging out, who have not received their housing yet, are eligible for free room and board through The Dormitory Project or ACS College Room & Board.

Students who are adopted, reunified, or aged out; and with housing, are not eligible for The Dormitory Project or the ACS College Room & Board Programs.

See [Appendix G13_Fair Futures Guide to the Dorm Project](#) and [Appendix G14_ACS College Room & Board](#) for more information.

TIP! If a student is eligible for **The Dormitory Project** or **ACS College Room & Board Programs** and wants to live in NYC in a dorm setting, the Coach should refer the student to the College Specialist to help the student apply.

EXPLORING 4-YEAR COLLEGES

For students exploring 4-year colleges, the major categories are: SUNY schools, CUNY schools, and private schools.

FOR EVERY YOUNG PERSON IN CARE, THERE IS OFTEN A SCHOOL THAT THE STUDENT WILL BE ABLE TO GRADUATE FROM WITHOUT DEBT.

Guidelines for students applying to 4-year schools include:

Students are encouraged to submit, at a minimum, the full complement of free applications to CUNY and SUNY schools. See [Appendix G5_Applying to CUNY Tip Sheet](#) and [Appendix G6_Tips for Applying to SUNY for Youth in Foster Care](#).

Students interested in 4-year CUNYs are counseled to include no more than one 2-year CUNY, ranked at the bottom of the application (since they will be accepted there automatically).

- They can always direct admit to a different 2-year CUNY later in the process if they want; 2-year CUNYs other than Guttman accept 100% of first-time applicants on a rolling basis.

Students are encouraged to apply for **Opportunity Programs**, which provide additional financial assistance and a range of supports. See [Appendix G8_Opportunity Programs](#) (and [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#)).

Students should consider non-profit private schools and out-of-state public schools as long as these schools have **100% of need met financial aid policies** and/or are willing to commit to covering the student's tuition/room and board gap.

Schools that students in care can attend for free (and have 100% of need met financial aid policies) include:

- All of the Ivies (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Columbia), Barnard College, Georgetown University, Vanderbilt University, Union College, and more.
- Students who wish to attend a private school in NYC and the surrounding area should be advised of CUNY/SUNY options which may, in many cases, be an equivalent (or even better) fit and be far less costly to attend.
- There are also organizations such as the Posse Foundation that offer full tuition scholarships. Unfortunately, it can be very challenging for a student to be able to find more than a couple thousand dollars in scholarships per year from publicly listed scholarships.

If possible, students should avoid applying to for-profit schools! In almost every case, these schools require students to take on student loan debt while also offering a lower-quality education and credential than the student could get at a college that they could attend without taking loans.

Guidelines for students planning to attend 2-year/community colleges:

- Incoming 2-year college students should start at CUNY due to the support programs and proximity to agency resources. The student generally guides the decision regarding the specific CUNY school choice based on proximity to where they expect to live and choice of majors. See [Appendix G5_Applying to CUNY Tip Sheet](#).
- While there is some variation between the quality of CUNY community colleges, and it is worth reviewing graduation rates in the process of considering options, the differences are generally fairly small, with the exception of Guttman Community College, which has a 3-year graduation rate of 45%.

Key notes on Guttman Community College:

All students looking at 2-year colleges should consider **Guttman Community College**, which has a range of on-site supports and a higher graduation/persistence rate compared to other 2-year CUNY schools.

The Guttman Community College model is based on national best practices and incorporates experiential learning. While it is academically rigorous, it also can be a good fit for students with remedial needs. This is because it offers “co-requisite” courses rather than remedial classes, meaning that students with remedial needs can fulfill them while earning credits at the same time. It has an extended-year schedule (the semesters are “Fall 1, Fall 2, Spring 1, and Spring 2”) which allows students to take more coursework if needed.

The Guttman Community College application process and other considerations when applying includes:

Guttman accepts students on a first-come, first-serve basis and typically does not accept applications after the February 1st admissions deadline. Thus, the key to getting in is to apply via the CUNY portal as soon as it opens in the fall and to make sure to sign up for an informational session as soon as it is offered.

In January/February, the student should receive an email for an Orientation/Informational Session at Guttman. If the student does not sign up for one, he/she cannot proceed with the application process. Guttman will not allow students who miss the Orientation/Informational Session to enroll. There are no exceptions under any circumstances.

- The Coach should be aware of this deadline and remind the student to check their email.
- The Coach should also ensure that the student still has access to the original email address the student provided on the CUNY application.

After the Orientation/Informational Session, students will have to sign-up for an interview. While the interview is technically not to screen for academic eligibility, it does not hurt to prep the student so that they can explain why Guttman is a good fit for them.

Reasons Guttman Community College may NOT be a good fit:

- There are a limited number of majors.
- Students are not encouraged to hold full-time (or even part-time) jobs during Year 1, which is very intensive academically. As most foster youth should receive full financial packages, and are eligible for work/study, this typically should not be an issue, unless the young person has other life/financial responsibilities (e.g., parenting).
- Guttman Community College is a single-site school, class sizes are small, and the model is heavily focused on peer/group work. For some students, this provides a very supportive, collegial environment. Other young people may find this socially overwhelming (particularly if they are very introverted) or might just prefer a more conventional college campus setting.

COLLEGE SELECTION

Once the student receives letters of acceptance, the student should sit down with the Coach, College Specialist, Guidance Counselor, and parent/caregiver (if applicable) to discuss selection. If a meeting with all of these individuals cannot happen in one setting, separate meetings can occur; Coaches should ensure, however, that the advice given is consistent.

Review [Appendix G12_Selecting a Best-Fit College](#), which outlines key factors to consider when selecting a college.

Key Factors for Selecting a Best-fit College:

LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS:

- Housing options;
- Campus location;
- School size;
- Campus diversity & demographics;
- Food plans;
- Safety statistics.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS:

- Majors offered;
- Academic standing requirements;
- Support Programs;
- Retention & graduation rates;
- National college rankings.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

TIP! See [Appendix G19: College Budget Tools](#).

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Once the student selects the college, they need to officially send their acceptance (typically by May 1st for selective 4-year colleges) and accept all financial aid grants (while rejecting all loans unless they are absolutely necessary to meet the cost of attendance). Schools typically request that students submit a “commitment deposit” in order to secure their space in the incoming class; this fee can often be waived by contacting the admissions office at the school and requesting a waiver due to the student’s foster care status.

F. FUNDING COLLEGE & FINANCIAL AID



There are many financial resources available to college-bound students in foster care. The key funding streams available to foster youth (some require maintaining a 2.0 or higher GPA) that students should apply for include:

Federal PELL Grant

New York State TAP grant

ETV (Education & Training Vouchers)

Opportunity Programs (SEEK/CD, EOP, HEOP, CUNY ASAP)

Foster Youth College Success Initiative

The nsoro Scholarship

The Dormitory Project or ACS College Room & Board
(if interested/eligible)

The Coach should ensure that the student is meeting with the College Specialist to apply for all of the above forms of aid. Applying for all forms of aid and College Specialist meetings are **Required Steps** to ensure that no student “falls through the cracks” due to a lack of staff knowledge about these supports.

TAP AND PELL GRANTS

The PELL grant is a federal grant and TAP is for students living in New York State. Both applications should be filled out as soon as the student applies to colleges. While TAP and Pell usually consider family income when determining financial aid eligibility, students who are in foster care, aged out of foster care, or were adopted out of foster care after reaching age 13 are considered independent students, which means that they do not need to submit financial information for their parents or foster parents. In practice, current and former youth in care almost always receive the full TAP and Pell awards. If a student is applying to a CUNY or SUNY school, these awards alone will fully cover their tuition and fees, and they will receive a \$2,000+ reimbursement per semester to use for dorming or other living expenses. See [Appendix G7_Completing the FAFSA & TAP Applications](#) for detailed information on how to apply and important tips.

ETV

The Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) provides youth in foster care, adopted from foster care after age 16, or aged out of foster care, with up to \$5,000 per year, depending on financial need. The funding can be used for accredited college or vocational/technical training programs. If students have outstanding balances on their college accounts, ETV will issue a check directly to the college; otherwise, students receive a monthly check in the mail after checking in with an advisor, which helps them with income smoothing.

Checks are not provided in the summer months, however.

Coaches should help students get summer internships or paid employment, if needed.

See [Appendix G10_Educational and Training Vouchers](#) for detailed information, how to apply, and key tips.

OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS (SEEK/CD, EOP, HEOP, CUNY ASAP)

First-time freshmen who enroll in college in New York State have access to a group of programs called “**Opportunity Programs**”.

These programs include benefits such as:

1. Admissions to the college for students whose applications would normally be rejected
2. Additional funding (type and amount varies by school)
3. Connections to supportive adults
4. Academic tutoring and career support
5. A summer program to help students get oriented to the school

Opportunity programs are very similar across colleges, but they have different names like SEEK, CD, EOP, or HEOP depending on the type of college where the program is located (see the table below).

Type of College	Name of Opportunity Program
City University of New York (CUNY) 2-Year Colleges	CD (College Discovery)
City University of New York (CUNY) 4-Year Colleges	SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge)
State University of New York (SUNY) All Colleges	EOP (Educational Opportunity Program)
Private Colleges (i.e. Colgate, Columbia, Cornell)	HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program)

Note that CUNY has other outstanding program offerings outside of its Opportunity Programs, including [ASAP, ACE, and Start](#). (Students cannot be in SEEK/CD and ASAP/ACE/Start at the same time - for more information about these programs and how to choose between them, see our guide to Support and Opportunity Programs at CUNY ([Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#))).

It is critical for students going to CUNY or SUNY schools to apply for the opportunity programs if they can, particularly if they are applying to competitive 4-year colleges; the opportunity programs at these schools can vastly increase the chances of being accepted, particularly when the school is an academic “reach”. Students interested in enrolling in an Opportunity program should check [Appendix G8_Opportunity Programs](#) for more information and make sure to apply well before the college’s regular admissions deadline: ideally, their application and any needed supporting documents should be submitted by the end of October of their senior year, as Opportunity Program spaces fill up quickly.

CUNY ASAP AND ACE

In addition to its Opportunity Programs, CUNY offers two key support programs to students attending its 2-year colleges and some of its 4-year colleges. They are called ASAP and ACE and are highly recommended to students in care.

ASAP is a program that focuses on helping students graduate from CUNY community colleges as soon as possible (in 3 years or less) through a combination of advisement, tutoring, early registration, block scheduling, free metrocards, book vouchers, and other resources. Students in ASAP have a 3-year graduation rate of 53%, which is more than double that of their peers who are not in a support program - students not in ASAP graduate in three years 25% of the time.

While ASAP is only available at 2-year colleges, a similar program called **ACE** is now available at John Jay and Lehman College, two 4-year colleges in the CUNY system.

Students cannot participate in both ASAP/ACE and College Discovery/SEEK - they need to pick one of the two.

For more information on ASAP/ACE and on how to choose between the program offerings, see [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#).

Finally, students attending CUNY and enrolled in any support or opportunity program (including SEEK, CD, ASAP, ACE, or Start) can receive additional foster-care specific support and resources through CUNY’s Foster Care Initiative (FCI).

SCHOLARSHIPS

There are several scholarships available to current/former foster youth, see [Appendix G11_School-Based Aid and Outside Scholarships](#).

Two important scholarships to know about include:

- **The nsoro Foundation scholarship:** Any current/former foster youth who is aging out or aged out of foster care and applying to college or in college is eligible (adopted students are not eligible). The scholarship requires a 2.0 high school/college GPA upon enrollment and encourages students to maintain above a 2.0. It provides a minimum of \$2,000 per student each year towards tuition, room, board, fees, books, and/or a laptop. Once accepted, students do not have to re-apply each year, and nsoro will fund them all the way through the completion of a Master's program. Every year, two scholars are selected to receive a \$10,000 scholarship.
- **New Yorker's For Children Nick's Scholars Program:** This scholarship is for youth who are aging out or aged out and have a 2.5 GPA or above; it's competitive, but provides a \$500-\$700 monthly stipend to students among other supports.

THE FOSTER YOUTH COLLEGE SUCCESS INITIATIVE (FYCSI)

FYCSI is a program specifically for foster youth to provide them with additional financial assistance to help them succeed in college. Students are eligible if they were in foster care at/after age 13 and admitted and enrolled in a SUNY or CUNY college or university, or at a private college or university that participates in the FYCSI program. They need to visit their college's College Opportunity Program office to apply. See [Appendix G20_Foster Youth College Success Initiative Information Sheet](#) for detailed information on the supports, application process, etc.

THE DORMITORY PROJECT AND ACS COLLEGE ROOM & BOARD PROGRAMS.

The Dormitory Project is a collaboration among ACS, CUNY, and the New York Foundling (a foster care agency) that enables foster youth attending any CUNY college to live in dorms affiliated with Queens College, the City College of New York, and John Jay College.

The Dorm Project provides students with room & board (a meal plan and a dorm), full tuition coverage, a daily stipend of \$30.93, monthly metro cards, and books. The program also provides academic and social-emotional supports including a College Coach, Tutor, and a summer inclusion program.

For students in foster care dorming outside the Dorm Project, ACS has a College Room & Board Program that provides all of the same financial supports without the additional academic and social-emotional supports. Note that while the stipend is offered year-round for students in the Dorm Project, the College Room & Board stipend is only disbursed when school is in session for the student, though this can include the Winter and Summer terms as long as the student demonstrates that they are enrolled in classes and dorming away.

These programs can be a great option for students who are aging out of foster care and have not yet secured housing and who want to have a dorm experience. Students can remain in the dorm until age 25 or until their college graduation.

One important advantage of The Dormitory Project and ACS College Room & Board is the weekly stipend that students receive. This helps students better manage their finances and makes them much less likely to leave college due to financial reasons. It combines their various forms of funding and instead of receiving a financial aid reimbursement in a large lump sum, it helps them smooth their income throughout the year. Students who are not in this program receive PELL/TAP reimbursements in late September/October and February/March, and can struggle to manage this amount of money and make it last until the next semester.

See [Appendix G13_Fair Futures Guide to the Dorm Project](#) and [Appendix G14_ACS College Room & Board](#) for additional information on how to apply, supports received, and key tips.

OTHER SOURCES OF POTENTIAL FUNDING FOR CURRENT/FORMER FOSTER YOUTH APPLYING TO COLLEGE INCLUDE:

Loans: Students are also eligible for subsidized and unsubsidized loans. However, given the abundance of resources, loans are strongly discouraged.

The NYS Excelsior grant is also available to students in foster care and covers any remaining gap for the cost of attendance at CUNY and SUNY schools after TAP and Pell grants are applied. However, given that the financial aid typically available to current/former students in foster care exceeds CUNY/SUNY's cost of attendance, this is often not needed. The main group of students in care who benefit from the Excelsior scholarship is for undocumented students in care, since DREAM Act TAP doesn't always cover the full cost of college attendance.

The Excelsior Scholarship is very restrictive – for example, it requires students to stay on track to graduate from a bachelor's program in 4-years, which can be challenging for some.

G. REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES

When students enroll at a CUNY or at a 2-year SUNY school, they may need to take a developmental or remedial course to bring their academic skills up to a “college ready” level. Because remedial courses are very time-consuming, do not offer college credits, and generally are associated with poor academic outcomes, students are advised to avoid remedial courses by either placing out, enrolling in CUNY Start, or taking co-requisite courses wherever possible.

At CUNY, students can place out of remediation by:

- Scoring above the cutoff score on the Regents exam (70+ on Common Core Algebra and 75+ on Common Core English).
- Earning a high ACT or SAT score
 - 480+ on the SAT ERBW section or 20+ ACT English score to place out of Reading/Writing
 - 500+ on SAT Math or 21+ ACT Math score to place out of Math
- Passing a college-level course in the subject
- Being considered “college ready” by CUNY’s Proficiency Index, which weighs students’ GPA and standardized test scores to evaluate their chances of passing a college-level course in English or Math. Little is known about how the Proficiency Index is calculated, and coaches working with students in care should not count on the Proficiency Index as a way of waiving remedial requirements.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT COACHES CAN DO TO HELP STUDENTS AVOID REMEDIATION AT CUNY IS TO ENSURE THAT THEY PASS THE REGENTS EXAMS WITH SCORES ABOVE CUNY’S COLLEGE READINESS CUTOFF.

Students who want to attend CUNY but are scoring below the cutoff should be encouraged to retake the Regents exam as long as there is a reasonable chance that they will be able to earn a score high enough to place out of remedial courses. Students in NYC schools can retake the Regents exam as many times as the test is offered.

At SUNY 2-year colleges students will generally need to pass a placement test OR already have passed a college course in the subject in order to place out of remedial classes. To avoid taking remedials, another option is to participate in either **CUNY Start and/or Math Start**, which do not require financial aid, but do not allow students to earn any credits. It’s also worth noting that they carry very strict attendance requirements.

- **CUNY students with two or more remedial needs** should consider enrolling in a semester-long remedial support program, called CUNY Start, before starting credit-bearing classes at their college - CUNY Start has shown strong outcomes in helping students resolve remedial needs and successfully transition to credit-bearing courses.
- **Students can resolve their math remedial need through a related program called Math Start** during the summer prior to their freshman year of college (or during the year). Math Start is an intensive 8 to 12-week program for students who need assistance building college-ready math skills.

See [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#) for more information on applying to CUNY Start and Math Start and some key considerations.

Some colleges, such as Guttman Community College, incorporate remedials into their credit-bearing courses.

This is called a “corequisite course”. This is an effective way to provide the remedial support students may need while earning college credits. CUNY has promised to scale-up corequisite courses throughout the University and coaches/specialists working with students should look for opportunities for students to resolve their remedial needs through corequisite courses.

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SECTION 21H & 21I

H. PERSISTING IN COLLEGE

The Coach plays a critical role in helping young people persist in college, from enrollment through graduation. See [Appendix G16_College Persistence Checklist](#).

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER

Once a student is enrolled in college and applied to all forms of funding, the Goal becomes: "[Prepare for and Complete College Semester with 2.0+](#)."

To complete this goal, the Coach should follow the **Required Steps** to ensure that the student:

- Attends any orientation and visits the college;
- Attend mandatory summer programs if they are enrolled in an Opportunity Program;
- Applies to the CUNY ASAP program if they are enrolled in CUNY and not accepted into an Opportunity Program;
- Has food, transportation, and basic minimum living expenses in their first month of college. There is almost always a 1-2 month lag before the students receive their financial aid reimbursement. Students in The Dormitory Project do not receive their meal cards until October.

The Coach should also follow the **Required Steps*** to help the young person persist in college setting:

- Check in with young person before AND after first day of the semester to debrief on experience
- Ensure student has a plan to purchase books
- Ensure student understands how to use college systems (e.g., Blackboard, CUNYFirst, etc.)
- Ensure student's address is correct in the college system and sets up direct deposit to receive financial aid disbursements
- Ensure student understands consequences of attendance policies (e.g., after two missed classes a grade drops)
- Walk through all syllabi with student and practice putting assignment due dates in calendar (*time management is a critical skill for success*)
- Check in with young person before "withdraw" period is over
 - If they need to withdraw from any classes, see Advisor. If failing a class is inevitable, it is usually better to receive a "W" than to get a failing grade, which can more significantly affect financial aid, scholarships, etc. (See [Appendix G17_How to Properly Withdraw from College Tool](#))
- Check in with young person during mid-terms (a highly stressful time)
- Provide persistence coaching; check in on young person's progress at least biweekly
- Check in with the young person before finals (another stressful juncture)

**All of these Required Steps are based on best practices and align with critical junctures where young people tend to become discouraged/overwhelmed and drop-out.*

Potential Steps to help students persist and/or improve their GPA include:

- Create a study plan
- Connect young person to tutoring (most colleges have a tutoring center and some agencies have college tutors)
- If a student wants to withdraw from classes or drop out completely: discuss pros/cons, financial implications, and meet with an advisor. See [Appendix G17_How to Properly Withdraw from College Tool](#)
- Check in with college counselor (or ACS Coach/Tutor) as needed
- Connect youth with campus Disability Services office
- Enroll in work-study
- Celebrate finishing with 2.0 or higher GPA

Any student who had an IEP or 504 Plan in high school should be referred to the campus Disability Office.

Students can receive additional time to take tests or other needed supports, which can make a big difference in academic performance. As students can feel self-conscious entering the office and discussing their disabilities, the Coach or College Specialist should offer to accompany the student.

At CUNY, in partnership with ACCES-VR, there is a program called **CUNY LEADS Plus** designed to serve students who need extra support, including with paid internships. LEADS Plus is located on five campuses: Bronx Community College, College of Staten Island, Guttman Community College, Kingsborough Community College, and Queensborough Community College. See [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#) for more information.

AFTER EACH SEMESTER

if the student wants to continue in college the Goal becomes “[Re-enroll in another semester of college](#)”.

Required Steps include:

- Ensure student’s grades are submitted to all scholarship providers and/or ETV upon completion of last semester (so that they continue to receive funding)
- Check student account to ensure there is no outstanding balance and no holds on the student account
- Apply to classes
- Submit class schedule to scholarship provider and/or ETV

ONCE RE-ENROLLED

The academic goal becomes: “[Prepare for and Complete College Semester with 2.0+](#)” until the student graduates.

See all associated steps in [Appendix E_Goals & Steps Guide and Worksheets](#)

EACH SEMESTER

Coaches should select the Goal “[Reapply to all sources of financial aid](#)” and check with the College Specialist to ensure that all financial aid (FAFSA & NYS TAP), ETV, and scholarships are reapplied to.

See [Appendix G16_College Persistence Checklist](#)

I. RECAP: ROLE OF THE COLLEGE SPECIALIST VS. COACH

To summarize, the Coach and College Specialist both play an important role in helping young people plan/prepare for, apply/pay for, and persist in college.





THE ROLE OF THE COACH IS TO:

- Provide exposure to college and post-secondary pathways, starting in 9th grade, and throughout high school;
- Meet with the student's guidance counselor to discuss post-secondary pathways, and ensure that students are enrolled in the correct coursework to graduate high school on time;
- Refer young people to the College Specialist in the 9th grade (if the student is engaged in school); for young people who come into foster care when they are older, they should be referred to the Specialist if the Coach thinks that college could be a potential pathway and/or once they express an interest in college;
- Refer all young people who are not on a college-bound track to the Career Development Specialist to explore vocational and other post-secondary pathways/ programs and develop a career plan;
- Communicate with the student's parent(s) about their post-secondary plans;
- Visit potential colleges with the young person, and/or sign them up for college tours;
- Ensure the student takes the PSATs and SATs, if they are interested in applying to a 4-year college, and receives tutoring
- Ensure that the student work with the College Specialist to apply to colleges and all forms of financial aid, opportunity programs, and scholarships that are available;
- Assist with the college selection process, if needed;
- Ensure students are prepared for the first semester, including
 - Having all books and supplies (including a laptop through New Yorkers for Children's Back to School Package program and, if dorming, dorm supplies);
 - Developing a plan and structure for organizing their documents and college coursework;
 - Checking their email regularly for information from the school;
 - Registering for classes;
 - Attending orientation or any mandated summer programming
- Provide persistence coaching to help ensure students remain enrolled in good standing, are connected to the supports they need, and reapply to college and financial aid/funding each year. See [Fair Futures Program Manual Section 21H](#).
- Help dorming-away students waive their campus health insurance by transitioning their Medicaid to a provider recognized by the campus.



THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE SPECIALIST IS TO:

- Meet with young people interested in college to have an exploratory and informational session, after they are referred by their Coach, and discuss what that roadmap/timeline would look like for them at their particular high school;
- Monitor PSAT/SAT scores of those students who do take them, and meet with them to discuss/refine college options;
- Organize college tours;
- Help young people apply to colleges in line with their goals, and assist with essays/personal statements, where needed;
- Ensure that each student applies to any Opportunity Programs available to them;
- Review any college applications or financial aid forms filled out by the student's school/guidance counselor
- Sit down with students and help them apply to FAFSA, TAP, ETV, and all applicable scholarships. Review scholarship essays and help with obtaining letters of reference as needed;
- Ensure students are signed up for any entrance interviews/exams;
- Work with students to submit the paperwork needed for The Dormitory Project and ACS College Room & Board;
- Reach out to students each semester to ensure they have a course schedule that will move them toward on-time graduation and assist with enrollment, if needed;
- Help young people re-apply to all forms of financial aid and scholarships each year;
- Assist students with transferring colleges, if needed. See [Appendix G18_Transferring Colleges Guide](#).

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SECTION 21J & 21K

J. EXPLORING A “GAP YEAR” OR DELAYING COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Some youth may not be prepared to attend college immediately after graduating high school, and/or may want to take time to build skills through academic remediation and/or a career development experience (e.g., work, an internship, a workforce/training program, a meaningful volunteer experience(s), etc.).

In other cases, a young person might graduate over the winter or at the end of the summer and may not want to rush into college weeks after their high school graduation. If the time is spent productively, taking a semester or a year between high school and college can provide young people with time to mature, build skills and confidence, and be better prepared for post-secondary success. Pathways and programs that help young people build their skills/credentials before enrolling in college or an accredited vocational program:

CUNY Start: a semester-long program for students with remedial needs in reading, writing, and/or math; it is free and does not use any of the student’s financial aid. (See [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#))

Math Start: an intensive 8 to 12-week program for students with remedial needs in Math. Unlike CUNY Start, it can be taken over the summer before college, or at other “off-cycle” times that do not align with the start of CUNY’s Fall/Spring semester. This program could also be helpful for youth interested in vocational programs that require a higher math level, which is not uncommon. (See [Appendix G9_CUNY Support and Opportunity Programs](#)).

Workforce development bridge programs: some of which offer job readiness, sector-based training, remedial coursework, college coursework in a specific area (often leading to a certification), internships, and/or job placement support.

- **The Young Adult Sectoral Employment Project (YASEP) Program:** a sector-based training program that allow youth to build skills, earn certificates/credentials (sometimes college credits), and have a paid internship. To be eligible for these programs, students sometimes need to pass a TABE exam at a certain grade level. Learn more: www.jobsfirstnyc.org/uploads/2018.8.24YASEP_Scorecard.pdf

Youth workforce programs: For students who are not eligible for bridge programs, there are a variety of workforce development programs that have flexible and multiple pathways for young people, including job readiness, employment placement, certificate programs, college remedial and access programming, etc.

Example: [The DYCD’s Train & Earn and Learn & Earn](#) programs.

Refer to [Appendix H7_Progressive Career Development Programs for NYC Youth](#) for a diagram of some effective programs.

Once a program type is selected, go to the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on the young person’s interests, geographic preferences, etc.

K. EXPLORING VOCATIONAL & OTHER PATHWAYS

Some young people may be interested in another post-secondary pathway, such as the trades or another vocational, sector-based training program. The Coach should work with the young person and the Specialists to explore options. Using assessment tools can help youth to determine what post-secondary path is best for them.

For simplicity purposes, all vocational, workforce training, and direct-employment pathways fall under Fair Futures “Career Development” umbrella. [See Fair Futures Program Manual Section 22.](#)

Youth should be aware that **vocational programs can be just as challenging and time-consuming as college (as sometimes there is this misperception!).**

For example, many accredited vocational programs in the trades require advanced skills/credentials just to apply. Union jobs in particular take several years of on-the-job experience (and/or a long apprenticeship) before one can apply and these exams are extremely competitive in themselves.

Young people should never be discouraged from embarking on a pathway in the trades, but they should exhibit a strong interest in the industry, as the credentials and experiences they earn will be mostly limited to that broader industry.

PROGRAMS TO EXPLORE (BOTH DURING HIGH SCHOOL AND AFTER GRADUATION) IF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN VOCATIONAL PATHWAYS OR DIRECT EMPLOYMENT:

The School of Cooperative Technical Education (Coop Tech): a half-day vocational program that offers students hands-on training in a variety of trade areas. Coop Tech serves students who are 17 to 21 years of age; students are either in high school, an HSE program, or high school graduates. Coop Tech offers classes in all five boroughs and students are given the opportunity to take part in a Work Based Learning Program which provides job readiness skills, knowledge of basic safety and OSHA procedures, CPR, and real world of work exposure. Upon recommendation from program faculty, each student can be matched with one of Coop Tech's intern partnership sites.

See [Appendix H5_CoOp Tech Application](#) and visit www.co-optech.org for eligibility information.

There are a number of youth workforce training programs in NYC.

Some of these also offer on-site HSE programs, internships, assistance with obtaining and maintaining jobs, and sector-based trainings that offer credentials and certifications. Search the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on sector, industry, eligibility requirements, certificates earned, etc.

Examples include:

- **The DYCD's Train & Earn, Learn & Earn, and Advance & Earn programs.** See <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/jobs-internships.page> for a description of these programs and a list of providers by borough. These will also be included on the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#).
- **Youth Build:** Offers HSE programming and 9 months of training/certifications in the trades to young people ages 17-24. Learn more: www.youthbuild.org
- **Job Corps:** Offers HSE preparation and career technical skills training in 10 high-growth sectors. Some sites offer residential placement where students can reside on campus. Learn more: www.jobcorps.gov
- **Young Adult Sectoral Based Employment Programs (YASEP):** These are sector-specific bridge programs where non-profit providers partner with at least one employer and industry skills training entity. Programs often include several weeks of remediation and soft-skills training to prepare young people for the longer skill-based training (and often a hands-on, paid internship) that leads to a certificate(s), credential(s), and/or college credits. Upon completion, job placement and retention support are offered. See www.yasepnetwork.org.

There are other adult **vocational/sector-based training programs** (which youth over age 18 can participate in) that offer free, sector-based, employer-recognized trainings in the trades/construction, IT, culinary, hospitality, healthcare, transportation, and other fields. Search the [Fair Futures Career Development Directory](#) to explore specific programs based on sector, industry, eligibility requirements, certificates earned, etc.

- **NYC's Small Business Services offers training programs for in-demand occupations across sectors at different locations throughout the city:** nyc.gov/site/sbs/careers/access-training.page

College certificate programs offer young people with a high school degree/HSE an opportunity to take courses and earn certificates and/or college credits in a specific area that can help them improve their employment credentials in that field. (It can also provide exposure to a college setting.) Most of the CUNY schools offer these certificate programs – see their websites to search by sector/program.

Union Jobs and Apprenticeships: Union-affiliated career pathways are a time-tested opportunity for youth with a strong interest in the trades or considering an alternative pathway to college. Union careers offer sustainable wages and viable career-tracks that offer skill development, leadership opportunities, and upward mobility. Many jobs in New York City's economy have union affiliation and apprenticeship training programs leading to entry-level and middle-skills jobs. There are approximately 100 apprenticeship programs in NYC, and over 90% are in the trades. Most apprenticeship programs are 1-6 years and can be competitive.

- **The NYS Department of Labor** has general information on union apprenticeships here: labor.ny.gov/apprenticeship/general/registration.shtm
- **Currently available union apprenticeships** are listed here (note that this is a statewide list broken down by district, so you have to scroll down to New York City): labor.ny.gov/pressreleases/apprenticeshiparchive.shtm
- **Technology apprenticeships in NYC:** p2atrades.org

- **One pre-apprenticeship program in the trades in NYC is called Building Works.** It's a 17-week program that offers free training and technical coursework to prepare candidates for an apprenticeship in the Carpenters Union. It requires a high school degree/HSE and participants have to test at a certain math and reading level.

Civil Service: There are also career opportunities in city government for young people with at least a high school degree/equivalent. Young people must pass a competitive civil service exam before they can be hired to become permanent employees. These exams assess a candidate's qualifications for a particular Civil Service job title. The exams can be very competitive, and many require college credits and/or experience in that area – they are often not entry-level jobs. ACS provides a test prep guide – see [Appendix H6_ACS Civil Service Test Prep Guide](#).

ACCES-VR: Students with IEPs and certain disabilities could enroll in ACCES-VR, which provides vocational rehabilitation services and should have opportunities to work in jobs integrated within their communities.

See [Appendix H4_ACCES-VR Information](#) to learn more.

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